

NEWS Release

For Immediate Release

Topic: Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)
Presence Indicated in Mississippi
Contact: Kelly Shannon
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Fairly widespread presence of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Mississippi prompts the State Department of Health to urge all residents to avoid mosquito bites.

EEE has now been identified in animals in eight counties in Central and South Mississippi. Counties which have had positive animal cases include George, Harrison, Lincoln, Neshoba, Newton, Pearl River, Scott, and Smith.

In June, EEE was confirmed in a number of emus in the Brookhaven area of Lincoln County. Later, EEE was diagnosed in horses and one mule in the various counties. Emus, horses, and mules are among several species susceptible to EEE, and the appearance of EEE in susceptible animals indicates risk to humans as well. The disease is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes.

In May, five confirmed cases of EEE in horses occurred in Louisiana, where the equine cases typically begin to appear in late June or early July. In Mississippi, Eastern Equine Encephalitis cases normally occur in late July into the fall. No human case has been identified so far.

State Health Officer Dr. Ed Thompson stressed the importance of avoiding mosquito bites.

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“Eastern Equine Encephalitis can produce severe and even fatal illness in humans,” Dr. Thompson cautioned, “and we have no known effective treatment. Prevention is the only effective weapon we have.”

Dr. Thompson suggested measures for Mississippians to avoid mosquito bites:

- Avoid mosquito-prone areas, especially at night when mosquito activity is highest
- Wear protective clothing when going into mosquito-prone areas
- Use insect repellents to exposed body parts in areas where mosquitoes occur
- Avoid storing open containers of water such as old tires and paint cans where mosquitoes can breed; and
- As horse owners, be certain all horses are up to date on proper EEE vaccinations.

EEE generally affects rural areas more than towns and cities. The normal cycle of the virus that causes EEE occurs between mosquitoes and birds, but under certain conditions the virus is transmitted to horses, emus, and humans by certain species of mosquitoes. Person-to-person and horse-to-human transmission does not occur.

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